L&M

Design Sense

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Special trademark issue

A publication on Packaging, Product Styling, Store Planning and Merchandising

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The sole purpose of this special issue of Design Sense is to explain L & M's philosophy of trademark design. The many marks reproduced here are intended only to illustrate a point or provide an illuminating case history. We designed only such marks as we are specifically credited with in the text.

Why are so many corporations trading in old trademarks ?

Gordon Smith, for IBM:
"We came to realize that our company was not reflecting the personality that we have inherent . . . Our machines are very modern, and if our personality is to be truly expressed, then our design had better be modern too—always advancing, like our machines do."

Thompson Products:
"Thompson has grown tremendously in the past 20 years . . . And Thompson research, development, production methods, products and markets have grown at the same pace. Now it's time for the Thompson trademark to change and reflect the modern trend of the company's many operations."

Union Carbide:
"We've never had any corporate identity. Our name doesn't mean a specific industry to most people, they don't know whether we make chemicals or what. So we went to an industrial designer and said, 'Put us in something like Du Pont's oval'... He put us in a hexagon."

United Van Lines:
"U. S. families move up to 16 times in a single decade. Moving companies like ourselves must keep their national name before the public eye. We therefore needed a consistent "movement" and "size" image which would not conflict with local agent identification."

"Obsolescence is a major driving force behind America's economic surge—in fashions, products, technology. And now, it even claims trademarks en masse." This is how one company sums up the new-trademark fever which gripped a record-high 21,000 American Corporations in 1956.

Undoubtedly you have noted the rash of "new look" trademarks blossoming forth in all avenues of communication. Re-designed symbols beckon from packages, greet the eye in print, cavort across TV screens, flag motorists from roadside signs.

Sometimes the changes are gradual, like Monsanto's modified "name within an initial" . . . or dramatically different, like Corn Products' switch to an abstract emblem. On occasion, they become bold visual announcements of corporate expansion, as demonstrated by Diamond Alkali's "mark for the future."

Significantly, many heavy industries, including Jones & Laughlin, Olin Aluminum, Union Carbide, have shed their traditional marks in favor of modern symbols. But the new-design bug has also bitten a wider cross-section of American industry, from food and beer, through gasoline and cars, to cigarettes and appliances. And from intense research analysis many corporations are giving their present trademarks, we can expect a considerable speed-up in the re-design tempo.

The identifying mark is your company's visible reputation. It epitomizes good will, public acceptance, and sales power. Why, then, are so many companies discarding what they have built up so painstakingly over the years?

We believe this re-design trend is a silent reflection of vast marketing changes, in products, packaging, sales techniques, shopping habits—and brand loyalty. Some trademarks retain their recognition value through all these changes; others can no longer cope with their complex market functions.

Consider, first, the staggering number of 300,000 active marks, plus 6,000 new-product symbols yearly—vying for consumer attention. Our markets are visually oversaturated with more than 9,000 diamond symbols, not to speak of the multitudes of look-alike squares, triangles, circles, and assorted forms. Add to these the horde of ineffectual shields, torches, griffons, flames and other devices that have long since become worn-out images rather than meaningful company symbols.

On the supermarket front,—where 60% of America's goods are sold—self-service merchandising has compelled trademarks to become more persuasive "silent salesmen." In the struggle for survival among competitive brands, where buy decisions are made in fleeting seconds, symbols with low visual value eventually fall by the wayside.

Then, too, the wave of recent corporate mergers often creates identity confusion. Or, companies diversifying into new lines may find themselves with several weak or misleading family marks. This is why numerous large corporations are concerned with achieving visual unity among their dozens of subsidiaries and hundreds of products.

Finally, many symbols no longer accurately reflect the "company personality." As Thompson Products notes, a firm's modernized products and policies often outmode its marks—particularly in the eyes of today's more design-sophisticated public.

For one or more of these reasons, many marks have lost their power of instant identification. This visual failure has forced thousands of vitiated symbols into trademark limbo. It has also had the positive effect of convincing corporations that trademarks haphazardly chosen, applied, and sent to market can only be haphazard sales tools.

Instead, many companies are aiming at maximum identity by presenting a "unified corporate look" wherever they make visual contact with the public. This single clear "corporate image" is achieved by consistently applying a distinctive design motif to packages, products, signs, letter-heads, advertising—and other graphics.

THE
PRUDENTIAL
HAS THE
STRENGTH OF
GIBRALTAR

HAMMER
GLAS

A&P

Betty
Crocker

The result of this visual unity is better consumer recognition of the owner and his products. More than that, a unique and favorable company personality is forcefully projected in every sales and advertising situation.

Of course, the trademark is only one of the design elements in the total corporate look. (We often use the term "brandmark" to describe a company's unique design-identity. It may be the trademark alone, or in combination with other visual elements, like distinctive package format, colors, product styling, etc.) The other visual components may be altered at any time to meet the market's quixotic needs. Product styles follow the dictates of tastes; brands are expendable; periodic package re-design is a market must. A long-lived trademark is therefore the design nucleus that keeps the corporate image constant throughout all changes.

What makes the trademark the most versatile identity device? How does it work in today's complex marketplace? Because these questions come up so often in our trademark assignments, we should like to touch on them here.

What's in a trademark?

Primarily, a trademark is a visual device used to identify a company's products or services. Through repetition, it becomes a short-hand symbol that the viewer associates instantly—and indelibly—with a specific corporation or brand.

Thus, you see the Rock of Gibraltar in ads as a pictorial representation for Prudential. You identify the scalloped "A & P" initials in a flash as Atlantic and Pacific. And a spoon symbol on food packages rings a clear "Betty Crocker" memory bell for millions of shoppers.

A good trademark is a quality statement as well as a memory trigger. Through a design pattern of letters, symbols and colors, it may express broad characteristics associated with a corporation, like integrity, strength, reliability, etc. Or, it may suggest desirable brand features, such as freshness, durability, flavor; or only a favorable "mood" or "feeling."

These visually transmitted characteristics must be believable. An upraised hammer symbol might do nicely for a heavy industry. But the connotations of breakage would wreak havoc on a glass company's personality. An inappropriate symbol in actual use is Reynolds Metals' "St. George slaying the dragon"—a far-fetched mark for aluminum producers.

On the other hand, Alcoa's abstract triangles, through their lightness and simplicity, convey the corporate image of an alert modern company. This attractive symbol, prominently displayed on packages, products and ads, has become the long-range design theme of the company's pace-setting character.

On the market firing line, a host of complex factors are conspiring to weaken the ties of brand loyalty and company recognition. Modern merchandising has cut transaction time to split seconds. It has taxed the consumer's memory with a flood of new products, redesigned packages, look-alike appliances...bombarded him via TV with a bewildering succession of brand images.

Against this backdrop of all-out competition, the mark is winning increasing recognition as a powerful merchandising tool. But it seems to us that there is not enough appreciation of the important role the symbolic salesman plays along each link of the market chain.

A successful symbol shares these traits: It attracts consumer attention; signifies a company or brand; conveys a cluster of favorable associations; and remains as a recall image in the memory track. Under different circumstances, it may perform any of these interrelated functions:

Seen on an ad, the mark is a company's visual seal that endorses copy claims, making the viewer more apt to believe—and remember—the product story. In the mass-selling situation, it signals impulse and deliberate shopper alike, thus creating a standout effect for the brand. Then, through its recognition power, it sparks the memory of pre-seen advertising, helping to convert favorable impressions into buy-action.

On a package, it can make a strong emotional appeal through colors, letters and shapes that express the brand personality, and give inviting visual clues to the contents. And quite often, where rival products are not sharply distinguished by style or price, the buyer depends on the mark as a manufacturer's guarantee of quality.

The mark can also provide a basic visual motif that links together a company line of products, thereby reinforcing brand identity. As a family flag, it can reflect famous-brand prestige on new or lesser known products.

And as still another instance of trademark flexibility, we find many service and industrial corporations using their new marks as public relation symbols of leadership, prestige, research-mindedness, etc.

Designers are therefore leaning toward the total market-integration approach, where the trademark is the design core of a distinctive corporate look. As part of an effective visual pattern repeated at every point of public contact, the mark builds up a cumulative "company image" that wins greater identity, and with this, maximum sales power.

We can show this more graphically in the following examples of 4 companies confronted with knotty trademark problems. In each case, varied company requirements dictated different solutions on the actual market scene.

NATIONAL

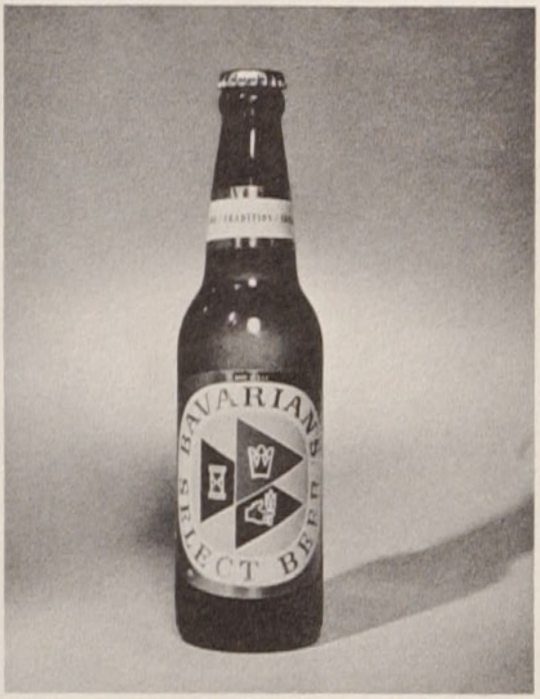
1

2

3

Betty Crocker

5


BAVARIAN
ECT BEE

4

Betty Crocker
INSTANT
Chocolate Malt
Frosting Mix

6

Trademarks in action

Problem:
National Carbon found itself with a variety of trade marks, none of them strong enough to act as an effective family symbol. The lack of uniform design in its packages added up to a diffuse and splintered company image. As a result, its products were not presenting a consistent quality and service story.

Solution:
A simple but distinctive "N within a shield" trademark for use on all the cartons in the company's electrode product line. Design-wise the shield symbol and lettering have excellent connotations of integrity, strength, protection.

Functionally, the mark reproduces well in all sizes and shows up clearly in spite of unavoidable carbon smudges on many cartons. Eventually, the unified brand identity will be extended to all the company's products. Even now it is beaming a stronger, more consistent "message to industry."

1 Order out of chaos:
A simple "N within a shield" trademark gives visual impact and unity to a complete line of company products.

Problem:
Due to Diamond Alkali's rapid expansion into new fields, its diverse package line had no design uniformity. This multitude of "package personalities" could eventually weaken brand recognition, customer acceptance — and the overall corporate identity. Clearly, a unique, consistent design image was needed, to give the package a "family look." But the old mark had neither the distinctiveness nor the visual impact to serve as the company's design nucleus.

Solution:
An outstanding new Diamond symbol was created as the basis for a coordinated corporate-identity program. Modern in tone, yet of traditional origin (the "d" is derived from both a classic letter and a chemical retort), the mark suggests reliability, progressiveness, and leadership in the chemical field. This attractive motif is expected to boost sales and instant identification by presenting a consistent design face on all of the packages.

2 Top diamond in the pack:
Selected for its standout value, visual clarity, and "character", the Diamond symbol will flash a consistent quality image wherever it meets the public eye.

Problem:
Motivational testing showed L&M that the Bavarian Brewing Company's brandmark gave many young consumers the unappealing impression of an old-fashioned beer. At the same time, a large percentage of the market was German, with a strong leaning toward beer brewed in the Old World tradition.

Question: What kind of re-design would strengthen Bavarian's brand-hold on its mature customers, at the same time that it captured a goodly share of youth market?

Solution:
We decided on a bright symbol-and-color scheme that suggested a "modern brewery with brewmasters of old." Eye-catching trademark consists of 3 golden symbols: an hourglass, for Time; a royal crown, for tradition; and a barley stalk held aloft by a hand, for Skill. The grouping of 3 design flags and bold colors heighten the feelings of gaiety, warmth, festivity and fellowship. The trademark is designed to stand by itself, or as an integrated part of a brandmark pattern which appears on cans, bottles, cartons, etc.

3-4 Symbols and sales:
Aimed at "mixed" regional market of customers old and young, the dramatic new design "attracts the eye when seen lined up with its four major competitors." (New York Times, 5/2/57.)

Problem:
For our General Mills package re-design, we wanted a shelf-dominating symbol that suggested the qualities Betty Crocker is famous for: friendliness, fine food, good recipes, kitchen guidance. The old oval framed signature was like too many oval symbols, and conveyed little of Betty Crocker's personality. Since stand-out power among competitive merchandise was essential, the new mark had to be attention-provoking. At the same time, it had to act as a product endorsement for the entire General Mills line.

Solution:
We developed a symbolic spoon as a visual reminder of the package contents — and as a tie-in with Betty Crocker advertising goodwill. Appearing consistently in red on each package, the spoon has become a powerful "sight and sales" device for linking up each product with the popular Betty Crocker. The spoon and enclosed personal signature — together with inviting package colors, format and appetizing pictures — add up to a distinctive family "brandmark."

5-6 The believable product story.
Spoon trademark adds sight and sales magnetism to Betty Crocker products through its pleasant associations with food and kitchen activities.

United

The designer enters the picture

The modern concept of winning greater identity, prestige—and sales power—through a dominant "visual personality" adds a new dimension to design. At the same time, by throwing the spotlight on the mark as the key identity motif, it makes a redesign program infinitely more challenging.

Each trademark is a unique solution to a unique company problem. A symbol, color or shape that works wonders for one firm will be unsuited to another—even in the same field. There are, however, many common marketing, design and human factors that go into the making of a successful new trademark.

First: every company has its own special personality. The design-management team must therefore decide on the ideals and attributes that best represent the firm and its products. But we must also know what negative associations are connected with the firm's current visual image—formed through its ads, packages, and other graphic faces.

Market and motivational research will uncover whether the company image strikes the consumer as modern or stodgy; friendly or standoffish; attractive or dull, etc. Now the designer knows which impressions must be eliminated...and which should be strengthened.

From all this is distilled a short list of traits—like integrity, leadership, service—which will provoke the most favorable consumer reaction. It is not the designer's intention to mechanically "picture" these positive characteristics. Rather, through design integrity and selection, he can make the symbols suggest whatever is appropriate. Thus, aesthetic superiority in design will "spell out" company and brand leadership far more persuasively—and permanently—than mere literal statement.

A second key consideration is the specific function a mark must play. This will help determine the level of abstraction—that is, whether the symbol is to be "pictorial," non-literal, or lettering forms. A giant corporation might well need a geometric form to cover diverse products.

A bank or other service company could take a traditional symbol that epitomizes concepts like friendliness, safety, etc. And some brand or company marks could easily utilize concrete devices: a spoon, for food; a wing, for speed; and so forth.

The design will also be influenced by the media and markets for which it is intended. Of course, every trademark should be adaptable to all media. It is designed to be visually effective when reduced or blown up, in black-and-white or colors; on TV, in letterheads, billboards, trucks, packages, or display. Nevertheless, the particular form a trademark takes—trade character, initials, logotype, etc.—will to a considerable degree depend on the media where it is to be displayed most consistently.

Thus far, in tracing some of the marketing factors bearing on trademark design, we have been on relatively safe grounds. But now we are entering the designer's own territory—where his creative alchemy transmutes a verbal idea into visual symbols. Why he selects one symbol over another is a matter between the designer and his creative imagination. We have, however, established certain general design yardsticks against which a trademark can be measured.

The mark should be simple. We place this criterion first, because there is a tendency to consider the mark as a kind of symbolic neon light, flashing out a long list of corporate virtues. True simplicity, as we can see it, consists in the designer paring away all extraneous elements, so that the basic visual theme comes through with clarity and impact.

It should be distinctive. This comes from the designer's special touch that sets a mark apart from those of the competitors. Originality, we want to stress, is not novelty. The designer may choose a much-used shape, or invent one of his own. What makes a symbol unique, memorable, is an unhackneyed point of view, by which the designer makes the lettering or other visual devices the exclusive representative of one company or brand.

It should embody the "core ideas" appropriate to the company personality. A mark may be "pretty" or have strong eye-appeal. But it will invariably fail in the marketplace unless it epitomizes the nature of the company or brand. As an example of a trade mark built around a concept: Our recent United Van Lines' mark utilizes an eye, map and arrow theme to symbolize carefulness, broad operational scope, and swift movement.

There are at least 5 broad areas the designer can explore in developing a trademark:

1. He can use the logotype: a custom-designed lettering of the company or brand name. (Royal). 2. He can create initials as the sole vehicle (IBM). 3. He can combine lettering with any shape or form (DuPont). 4. He can select a literal picture (Elsie the Cow). 5. He can utilize abstract devices (Alcoa).

On the following pages we show you a goodly number of older and more recent trademarks, separated into these 5 categories. Our accompanying remarks are by no means intended as critical evaluations of the different trademarks. Rather, we want to point out how some of the complex influences we have discussed went into the selection of one category over another.

Coca-Cola

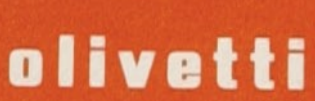
Lenthéric

Kodak

KEYSORT

Wísk

Burry's


olivetti

Scripto

LIN
LUMINUM

IBM

Logotypes: The name is the thing

A logotype—with no accompanying visual device—has the great asset of directly conveying your company or brand name. But it is not an effective mark unless it can acquire symbolic meaning as well. A signature should be seen not only as a string of spelled-out letters, but as a distinctive visual image.

The Coca-Cola mark, for instance, is known the world over by its characteristic swirls. And Kodak's block letters, against the familiar yellow background—speak in the internationally understood language of symbols. Logotypes are used to great advantage where the brand name is the decisive marketing element—or where a company signature has great prestige. Today, logotypes are used widely for short, "catchy" names, like Duz, Joy, Wisk, where split-second recognition is essential in display, shelf, and ad situations —particularly TV.

Because the logotype appears to the human eye as an overall image, it also portrays secondary connotations about your company or product. Ingeneous designers can subtly vary the lettering styles to suggest different traits—smartness, strength, integrity, femininity, etc. The clean, brisk italics in "Wisk," for example, set the tone for a quick-acting detergent. The carefully underplayed Olivetti logotype keynotes the firm's high degree of design sophistication.

Note, too, how Lentheric's personalized signature, by graceful curves and an adroit contrast between light and heavy strokes, "gives off" a sense of delicacy, elegance, and exclusiveness. Or, how the Burry Biscuit Company signature uses "modernized" Old Style English lettering to convey tradition, high quality—and in addition, an up-to-date feeling.

The logotype can even suggest the form or function of a product. The "Scripto" mark has the smooth, effortless, free-flowing handwriting style one associates with pen or pencil. Keysort's punch-card letters create the effect of Royal McBee's product.

Like other marks, logotypes gain in visual impact by consistent and repeated use in all visual media. You can create fresh interest by changing the color, size, ad backgrounds, or by imaginative adaptation for TV. The only rule here is that you retain its visual integrity as a unique design unit—representating your unmistakable signature under any and all circumstauces.

Initials: Short cuts and long memories

Sometimes, your company initials can become an effective mark. The signature or a design device is ordinarily attached, but well-established initials, like "IBM," can stand by themselves as identifiers.

Initials are used when the signature is too long or otherwise incompatible with the company's other products or subdivisions. On occasion, too, initials lend themselves visually and phonetically to trademark treatments.

Well designed initials take on symbolic associations, so that they register in our minds as split-second images of the company name rather than as abbreviations. We need not translate "IBM" into its full name any more than we have to recall the individual words of RSVP.

Because of their "stenographic" nature, initials must signal a clearer identity message in a briefer time than a full logotype. The best initials therefore combine simplicity and uniqueness—to command instant attention, yet remain long in the viewer's memory.

Continental Can's initials are arranged in a nest format so that the "3C's" are dynamically interrelated rather than repeated. The rhythmic effect of this design pattern lends it strong recognition and retentive power.

Some of our older initial marks have survived through the weight of promotion rather than design distinction, or ability to communicate something of a company's qualities. The new Olin Aluminum mark is a good example of how initials can function as a meaningful design theme of a company. The interwoven "O" and "A" come over as a striking visual unit, recognizable even when the company's name is omitted. At the same time, the modern tone backs up the company's claim of being "ultramodern" and experimental.

International Harvester's initials have won national acceptance in a remarkably short time. Here, the bold superimposed "I" and "H," reinforced by red and black colors, visualize a trend-making, progressive company.

Another dramatic example of skillful design is the New Haven Railroad's "N" and "H" letter form. Painted on trains in vivid black, white and red combinations, the initials are charged with design excitement when seen at rest, or at high speeds.

It seems clear, then, that initials can be excellent vehicles for a company's visual identity. In the near future, we can expect more corporations to infuse new design life into their own outworn initials.

Esso

TP

DOW

MONSANTO

Monsanto

DU PONT

A

GM
GENERAL
MOTORS

STEEL

Mobil

ALCOA
ALUMINUM

CBS

AMERICAN
BROADCASTING
NETWORK

What shape is your signature in?

We suspect—on the basis of our visual safari through myriads of marks—that the largest number consist of initials or logotypes enclosed within geometric shapes or more complex forms.

The popularity of this trademark device is based on the assumption that the "surround" gives greater design definition and uniqueness to the initials or signature, thus increasing visual impact and memorability. Its ability to stand out more clearly from the background also makes it more readily applicable to different media.

As we see it, the use of a "surround," whether it be a simple circle or an elaborate scrollwork border, by no means assures greater identifying power or individuality. Actually, a good designer conceives of the letters and shapes as a "design whole"—in which the two elements complement and strengthen each other. The resulting trademark is not merely "Jones within a circle," but a visually unified form unmistakably belonging to this and no other Jones.

Often cited examples of this trademark type are the Esso and Du Pont ovals, the Dow diamond, the General Motors square, and the revised Armstrong circle. The Esso mark provides exceptionally strong identification precisely because the soft, round letters in unity with the oval come through as a clean, simple and unified format.

To achieve this kind of distinction in marks, designers are turning toward more integrated and simplified shape-and-letter combinations. Thus, Thompson Products changed its tepee symbol into an unadorned triangle, with modern initials. Monsanto also "contemporized" the company logotype, to bring it into design unity with the big "M" that acts as an outer shape.

A more radical trademark re-styling is Jones & Laughlin's updated yellow initials within a green square. The new mark serves as key design element in an all-embracing package-identification program. So, too, National Carbon Company's "N within a shield" mark gives visual identity to a complete package line.

Other examples of recent changes—like American Cyanamid, Hooker Chemicals, and Union Carbide—point in the same direction: A greater design inventiveness in creating "combined" trademark forms that stand out in a field of static and anonymous shapes.

Say it with symbols

Obviously, every mark has symbolic overtones, insofar as it evokes an instantaneous association with a specific company or product. As we use the term here, however, a symbol is characterized by its ability to communicate through abstract configurations rather than literal pictures or letter forms. Abstractions are sometimes thought of as less meaningful and effective than representational marks. Actually, a good abstraction captures the essence of a company's qualities in the most simple, concentrated aesthetic form. This is true, whether it is a unique shape, a linear pattern, or a recognizable object.

A. B. Dick's mark is an abstract but clear outline of a trim, modern duplicating machine. The new ABC network "A" is trylon-shaped, suggesting a progress-minded communications company. The CBS "television eye," from the formal as well as symbolic points of view, serves as an ideal image for its company.

The present turn toward abstraction springs from the need of corporations for lasting umbrella identity-marks that can cover a gamut of products. Pictorial marks, by their tangible nature, have a narrower frame of reference, so that they can rarely represent a variety of unrelated products.

But the designer can build an abstract from scratch, imbuing it with the corporation's intangible characteristics. Through promotion, the abstract mark can become the exclusive, unforgettable image of a corporation's qualities, linking any number of divisions, products, and packages. And because its visual strength is derived from form integrity rather than resemblance to an object, an abstraction is more apt to remain a timeless mark.

We can illustrate this by comparing some new trademarks with the old. Alcoa's double-triangle is balanced, graceful and uncluttered as against the realistic shield that served before. It gives more of the clean, contemporary feel of a wonder-metal company. The Diamond Alkali mark is infinitely more expressive of particular company than the visually "dead" diamond that preceeded it.

The Corn Products new cross-section-of-a-cob abstraction is far simpler and more contemporary than its old fashioned, intricately detailed Indian maiden. This is illustrative of how the dead hand of "over-realism" can not only obsolete—but actually render a trademark symbol quaint.

These factors—broadness of application, permanence, uniqueness—explain why so many corporations expanding into new fields are looking favorably upon abstract symbols as "corporate look" solutions.

Designer Peter Schladermundt points out that there was some unclarity about who designed the new Mobil sign, illustrated on the opposite page, as a result of our story on the Passing of Pegasus (Vol 1. No. 1). It was created, of course, by Peter Schladermundt Assoc. We think it is an excellent symbol that should do a fine job for many years.

P.S.: Pegasus will still be the basic identification device, but will be reduced in size.

What type of company does each symbol communicate?

1

2

3

Here's a simple test we conducted to determine the degree to which particular abstract marks (numbered 1 to 6) communicate the kind of company each one is supposed to represent.

In scrambled order, here are the companies (all European) involved: drugs; road-building; machine tools; engraving; lighting equipment, and drills.

On a purely exploratory basis, we questioned some people unaquainted with these symbols, and asked them to link up each mark with one of the companies. For instance, we asked which mark suggests a drug company, which a drill-manufacturer, etc.

4

5

6

Results: Virtually everyone correctly associated two of the marks with their companies. Two other symbols were correctly matched most of the time. The remaining two were almost never correctly matched.

This is not intended to prove the superiority of one mark over another. The test merely shows the degree to which different marks can "symbolically" convey the nature of a company's activities.

If you wish to try the test yourself, you can check your results against the correct ones given on the opposite page (bottom right).

The power of a picture

One picture, the saying goes, is worth 10,000 words—and there are ten thousand and one pictures that have been used in marks. Simple, or elaborate drawings, paintings, trade characters, buildings, globes, animals, subjects taken from mythology, history, nature—an infinite variety of sources can serve as the design basis of a mark.

Many of our earliest successful trademarks illustrated a company's products, processes or services through "realistic" pictures. The reasoning was—and still is to a degree—that people quickly associate a recognizable picture with a brand or company, and therefore remember it more readily.

Thus, "Mr. Peanuts" is actually the product itself. A bowl of fruit is a pictorial pun for Fruit of the Loom. A greyhound represents speed and smoothness for Greyhound Buses. The Bigelow Weavers mark shows hands in the process of weaving. And the Corning Glass Company is represented by—yes, a man blowing glass.

Today's designers are placing less reliance on literally rendered pictures. Intrinsically (the argument goes), most pictures tend to become dated in a relatively short time, like fashions or fads. Secondly, a trademark picture, relating to one specific product, may become unrepresentative of a company's new products. Nevertheless, many realistic trademarks, like RCA Victor's "listening dog," Borden's "Elsie the Cow," and others, retain their identity power long after they have become design-outdated. By inherent worth or endless promotion, they have attained the status of "folk imagery."

A company owning a popular pictorial mark will modify or "update" it periodically rather than find a new symbol—as with the White Rock girl, the Quaker Oats man, and, recently, Singer Sewing Machine's lady. Of late, as we have pointed out, the design tendency has veered toward more abstract, "timeless" symbols. The greatest number of new or modified representational marks are TV trade characters.

But even for more formal marks, we need not rule out pictorial devices for the future. Whenever we need to portray a specific brand function or company quality, a realistic drawing may be indicated. Especially when it is rendered with the high aesthetic standards that can make it withstand the ravages of time and fashion.

Putting your old mark to the test

Dr. Myron J. Helfgott, Ph.D.
President, Package Research Institute, Inc., an affiliate of Lippincott & Margulies, Inc.

More and more companies are taking a second look at their graphics, to see what can be done to make them more effective selling tools. In virtually every case, this results in better marketing—and greater sales. The secret of this success lies not so much in the specific design, or in the research accompanying it, but in management's decision to evaluate their visual communications.

How do these companies go about it? The wise ones start with research. They want a valid appraisal of their present design. Sales figures reflect the success of their total marketing effort—not any one part of it—so that they cannot serve as the design evaluation. Special research is needed.

This consists of two kinds of information on the present design: 1. Its penetration, or the degree to which the mark is known among consumers to represent their company. It reflects the investment they have in their current design among consumers. 2. Its intrinsic effectiveness, which tells management how good the design is in itself, regardless of how widely it is known in the market.

An intrinsically effective mark must do two things: 1. Be quickly and easily recognized and identified. 2. Communicate the kinds of feeling about the company which will make consumers more likely to buy its products or use its services. In other words, it signals good brand-image qualities.

Research can indicate any one of four possible situations diagrammed below:

situation	A	B	C	D
penetration	high	high	low	low
intrinsic effectiveness	high	low	high	low

What should management do in each case?

A: This is good. Nothing need be done. There is, in effect, no problem.
B: Its low effectiveness indicates the need for re-design. One would recommend that it be within the framework of the present design, as much as possible, to take advantage of its high penetration.
C: It is a good mark, but not well-known. What it needs is not re-design, but greater use and exposure—perhaps through advertising.
D: This is a poor, unknown design. Certainly there is need for re-design here.

The right decisions come out of informed judgments based on the relevant facts. By supplying these facts, research can show whether the old mark needs changing—as well as the latitude and direction of the re-design.

symbol	company	correct matchings
1	drills	low
2	engraving	medium
3	drugs	low
4	machine tools	medium
5	lighting equipment	high
6	road-building	high

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